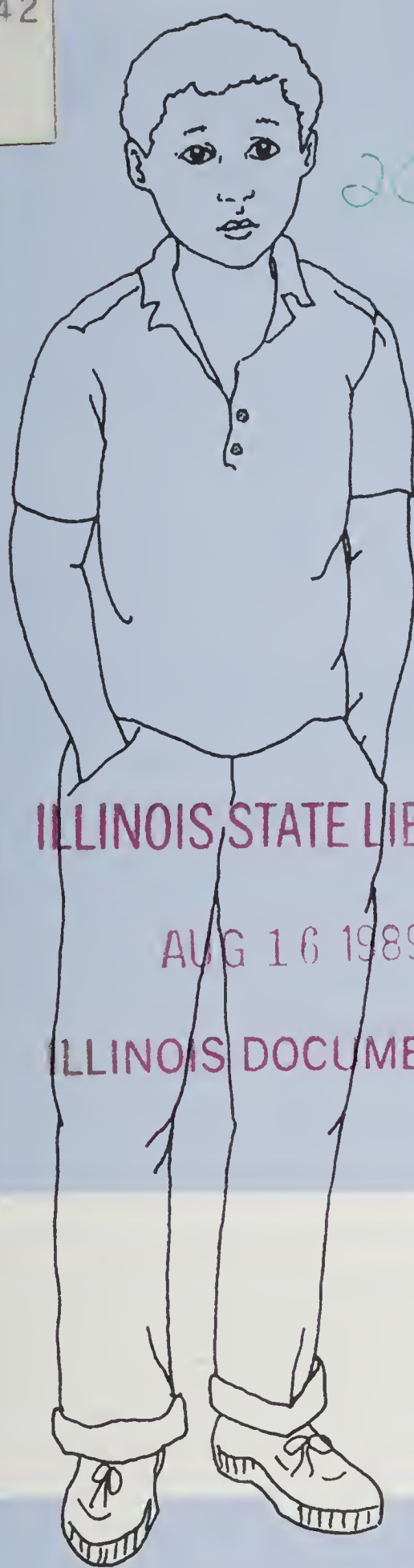


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ILLINOIS DOCUMENTS

Helping Children Saving Families

Illinois Department of Children
and Family Services

Gordon Johnson/Director

minority children through One Church, One Child. This program's basic premise is that each black church should recruit from among its members at least one family to adopt a waiting black child. Since its founding in 1980, more than 35,000 people have attended One Church, One Child recruitment programs, and the number of black children waiting for adoptive homes in Illinois has declined by 90 percent.

Illinois is also a leader in foreign adoptions, with adoptions of out-of-country children here running nine times higher than the national average. Through its Office of Intercountry Adoptions, the Department helps families through the often complex issues which characterize this adoption alternative.

The Department offers counseling when a problem arises in an adoptive family, but experience has shown that preventing such adjustment problems works much better. Federal grants have promoted this approach through extensive training of adoption staff and better preparation of adoptive families.

Youth Services

Since 1982, DCFS has developed and managed a broad array of programs to meet the needs of troubled older youth. The largest and probably best known of these services is called Comprehensive Community-Based Youth Services. Its goal is to divert youth from the child welfare or juvenile justice systems by providing timely services when emergencies or crises first arise. These services include family counseling, individual or group counseling, employment and educational aid, drug or alcohol abuse education, advocacy services, short-term foster care, and around-the-clock crisis intervention.



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Unified Delinquency Intervention Services tries to divert selected delinquent youth from commitment to the Department of Corrections by providing corrective and educational services to them at the community level.

The Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission is a youth service organization with two functions. Its first goal is to determine priorities for the expenditure of federal juvenile justice funds made available to the state. In addition, it serves as an advisory committee to the DCFS Division of Youth and Community Services.

The twin problems of teenage pregnancy and teenage parenthood are being addressed through a multi-agency program called Parents Too Soon. The DCFS portion of this program helps young parents cope with their new responsibilities by offering parenting training, child development classes, and aid with household and family management. DCFS also takes part in Parents Too Soon awareness campaigns which seek to promote responsible sexual behavior and greater communication between parents and their children on sex-related issues.

Other youth services include programs for homeless teens, various employment projects, interagency efforts to serve severely disturbed adolescents, training in job skills and household management for youth preparing for independence, and general care and education for unaccompanied refugee children. In addition, the Department operates three children's shelters in Cook County.

Day Care

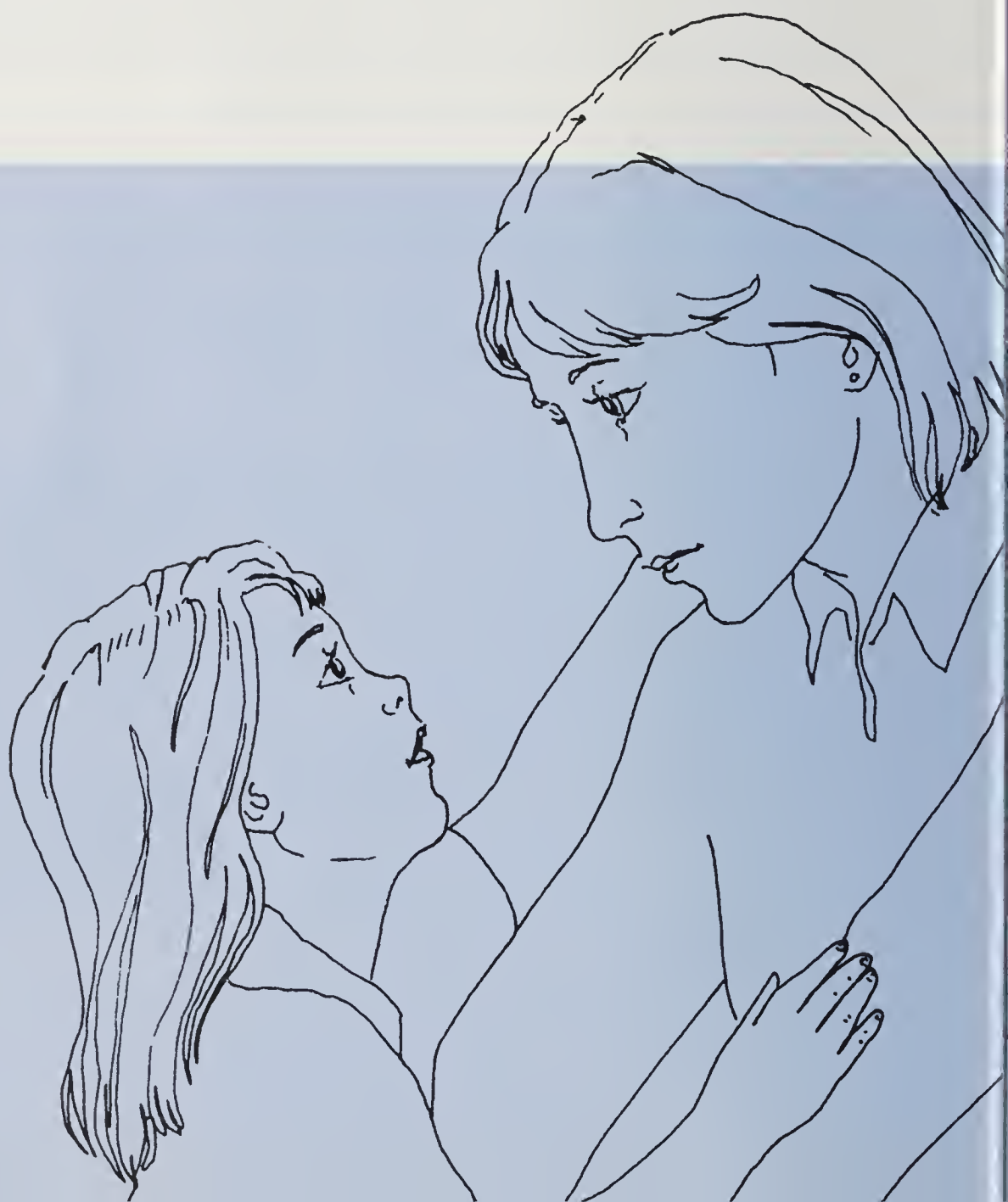
The Department licenses and monitors 8,000 day care centers and homes which, in turn, serve some 200,000 children. The agency also funds day care programs for 20,000 children from low income, migrant or "at risk" families. It sponsors training programs for day care workers and offers education and consultation services to day care facilities and parents.

The Department also promotes and develops new resources. It has taken a leading role recently in encouraging employers to operate or sponsor on-site day care

Helping Children Saving Families

A society that cares for itself cares for its families. Families who care for themselves care for their children. And children who care for themselves have a much better chance of caring for the society they inherit. But under the strains and pressures of living in this modern age, it is not so easily realized.

The state of Illinois cares about families—which is why there is an Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Created by the Illinois General Assembly in 1964, the Department's mandate is to "protect children and preserve and strengthen family life." It strives to meet that mandate by providing the services described below. Through the efforts of 2,700 staff working out of 80 offices statewide, those services benefit 600,000 Illinoisans a year.




Child Protection and Casework Services

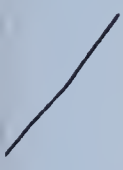
The number is easy to remember: **1-800-25ABUSE**. And it is used often: a thousand times or more a day. It belongs to the Department's child abuse hotline — the nerve center of the state's child protection system.

Some professionals — such as doctors, teachers and police officers — are required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect cases to the hotline. About half of all reports, however, are phoned in by the general public.

Trained, experienced child protection workers operate the hotline 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Backing them up is a computer-based register of over 300,000 past child abuse and neglect reports. When workers take a report, they first check the register to see if the child or suspected abuser has been involved in a past report. This helps assess the current degree of risk to the child. Then the workers electronically relay information on the report to a DCFS field office for investigation.



Investigations must begin within 24 hours. In emergencies, they start sooner. Normally they include interviews with the child, the alleged abuser, the person who reported the abuse, and others who may have knowledge of the case. The Department automatically notifies law enforcement authorities in severe cases, such as sexual abuse or aggravated battery, and calls on other professionals for help as needed.



If an investigation reveals convincing evidence of abuse or neglect, DCFS may open a service case or refer the family to another agency for help. Such help is called follow-up or casework service. Providing, coordinating and evaluating it is the Department's most substantial activity in terms of staff time and resources.

Department staff provide many follow-up services directly. Others are purchased from private agencies or arranged through referral to other public agencies. They may include individual and group counseling, parenting training, day care, homemakers, placement of children outside the home, special services for older youth, supervised visitation, referrals to substance abuse treatment and other social services available in the community.

Juvenile courts often require families to cooperate with DCFS as a condition of keeping their children. Other families approach the Department voluntarily. The agency's services are open to all.

Preservation and Prevention

Under its Family First Initiative, DCFS offers a wide range of services to families in immediate danger of having their children removed from their custody and placed in foster homes. These services include emergency caretakers, housing assistance, respite care, child care, transportation, counseling, emergency food assistance, emergency cash assistance, and training in child development and household management.

The goal of these services is to prevent the break-up of families by providing help during a time of crisis—and not after the crisis has passed. Local agencies provide the services under contracts with DCFS. A family may receive such services for up to 90 days, but only if the Department believes the safety of the child can be assured.

Family First programs began on a limited basis in a portion of the state's counties in 1989. By 1993, state law requires that they be available throughout Illinois.

The Child Abuse Prevention Fund is another DCFS program of first aid for families. Illinois citizens support the Fund primarily through donations from their state income tax refunds. The proceeds support dozens of community-based prevention activities around the state. These include parenting training classes, support groups, child safety

C.3 programs, parent aides, parent help hotlines, and other similar efforts.

Substitute Care



Sometimes, in spite of all efforts to the contrary, it is best

if a child is placed outside the home for a time. This is called substitute or foster care—and must be authorized by a judge in a court of law.

The Department first determines in these situations if placement with a relative is possible and appropriate. If not, the agency sends the child to live with an unrelated or “foster family.” If the child needs more help and supervision than a foster family can provide, placement in a specialized foster home, group home or child care institution is considered.

Permanency—a home and family to call one’s own—is a fundamental goal for all children in substitute care. To assure this, a permanency plan or goal is set for each new foster child. Twice a year, a committee of DCFS staff and other people concerned with the case (including the parents) meets to see how well the plan is being followed—and to change the plan if that is in the child’s best interests.

Adoption

If a court determines that a child cannot or should not be returned home, then adoption is normally the next step considered. DCFS works with those children who are often hardest to place. These “special needs” youngsters include handicapped children, minority children over age three, all children over age 10, and groups of brothers and sisters who want to be adopted together. More than 250 such children are waiting to be adopted at any given time.

The Department addresses the special adoptive needs of

programs for their employees' children. Where this is not possible, the agency emphasizes development of resource and referral services. Such programs received a significant boost in fiscal year 1990 when the Illinois General Assembly appropriated \$1.35 million for their expansion and development.

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Other Programs

Research and demonstration projects allow DCFS to try new approaches to old problems — or to tackle a new problem through an innovative approach. Currently, the Department has such programs to serve infants who are born with a cocaine addiction or the HIV (AIDS) virus.

Besides day care centers and homes, the Department also licenses child care institutions, group homes and foster homes. This helps ensure that the care and treatment children receive in such facilities meets minimum standards as set by state law.

In addition, hundreds of men, women and teenagers throughout the state serve Department families as volunteers. They help clients with transportation or simply serve as their friends or advocates.

For More Information

Call or write:

**Office of Community Relations
Illinois Department of Children
and Family Services
406 East Monroe Street
Springfield, Illinois 62701
(217) 785-2670**

or call your local DCFS office.